Fire and Water:
Developing Mechanisms for Community Stewardship of Natural Resources

A WorkshopSponsored by:
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The Ford Foundation,
& The National Forest Foundation

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction…… 3

Meeting Objectives and Structure…….. 3

Importance of Community-based Approaches…….. 4

Update on Large-scale Watershed Restoration Projects…… 6

Update on Cohesive Fire Strategy: Forest Service …….. 7

Update on Cohesive Fire Strategy: Department of Interior ……. 9

Expectations of Community Forestry Workforce for Collaborative Stewardship… 11

Expectations of Mobile Workforce for Collaborative Stewardship……. 13

Role of the Forest Service in Building Local Capacity…… 14

Collaboration between the Forest Service and State Government Assistance Program 14

Working with the States…… 15

Background on Stewardship Contracting…… 16

Understanding Existing and Available Authorities for Stewardship…… 17

Breakout Sessions…… 18

Breakout Results: Identified Issues and Key Contacts……..…… 18

APPENDIX A: List of Participants

APPENDIX B: About the Pinchot Institute

APPENDIX C: Additional Pinchot Institute Publications (Order Form)

Introduction

The Pinchot Institute for Conservation, in partnership with the USDA Forest Service, organized and facilitated an introductory workshop to assist with the development and planning of Community Stewardship Workshops on Restoration and Fire, in Lakewood, Colorado from January 18-19, 2001.

In its "Cohesive Fire Strategy", the USDA Forest Service sought to establish a national program for protecting fire-adapted ecosystems in the interior west. Within this Strategy, the Agency recognized the importance of collaborative stewardship in meeting the desired goals of resource stewardship, while also strengthening local capacity of surrounding communities. By working closely with local communities, ecosystem restoration projects can be cooperatively identified and designed to address local community development, in addition to the ecological goals set within the fire strategy and restoration plans. Stewardship contracts, which emphasize multi-year, multi-task and results oriented projects, can also be explored. Such contracts can be designed to expedite the accomplishments of near-term projects, while increasing the capacity of local community-based firms over time by through the encouragement of capital investment and the development of an experienced, highly-skilled workforce. Finally, new partnerships can be forged to help defray the costs of implementation and planning and build networks of support for necessary work.

To help develop a greater understanding of community and Agency perspectives, expectations, and desired outcomes related to Collaborative Stewardship and community-based implementation of the National Fire Plan and Large-scale Watershed Projects, a coordinating meeting was in Lakewood Colorado. Specifically, the meeting helped identify a specific subset of hazardous fuels reduction projects that can be undertaken by community-based firms through multi-year, multi-task land stewardship grants and/or contracts. Additionally, the meeting will focus on long-term prospects- beginning the process of community-based strategic planning with involved agencies (e.g., USDA Forest Service, USDI Bureau of Land Management). In these long-term strategic plans, groundwork for ongoing activities shall be developed (e.g., watershed improvement, fire risk management, and community-based monitoring and reporting).

Meeting Objectives and Structure

Presented by Al Sample, Pinchot Institute

In the past, individuals and organizations interested in building or expanding collaborative stewardship of our natural resources have faced a series of false starts- as the agency continues to be somewhat resistant to collaboration. The purpose of this workshop was to offer the opportunity to implement the myriad of concepts that participants have been discussing for over five years.

Each invited participant represents a delegate of networks from home. And it is the hope that this meeting will allow for involved discussion of issue and facilitated dissemination of information to the greater audience (i.e., participants represent "nodes" of communication within the greater field of interests).

The workshop was not designed as another planning meeting. Rather it was designed to be a true working session. The key distinction will be discussions surrounding the driving force behind the

National Fire Plan and those issues that lend themselves to community based work. The challenge for this meeting was to identify the current capacity of communities and their ability to address emerging resource needs- identifying what communities are currently set up to do and what communities will need to reach capacity (e.g., additional time, training, funds, access, etc.).

Specific objectives for the workshop include:

- Information sharing
- Discuss opportunities/limitations
- Identify community interests to achieve goals for this and next fiscal year.
- Address community sustainability
- Develop tools and knowledge sufficient for collaboration.
- Understand basic mechanisms for communities to achieve objectives
- Lay the groundwork for different working relationship between communities with land management agencies

Importance of Community-based Approaches

Presented by Phil Janik, USDA Forest Service

The agency is currently undergoing cultural change. As such, several challenges face the Forest Service. Just as community organizations respond to stalls and setbacks in Collaborative Stewardship, the same issues are now being faced within the agency.

The importance of community based collaborative stewardship is:

- Getting work done together
- Resource ownership
- Return to our grassroots

Collaborative Stewardship is not a new initiative for the Forest Service; it is a way of doing business. Everyone has a role in how the Forest Service adopts and exercises Collaborative Stewardship. Understanding that the Forest Service is involved as a business, and not just a relationship, is fundamentally important. The agency and its partners need to enter a new dimension, where they look not only at behavior, but become more business oriented and address specific expectations. This has not been done as well in the past as it could have been.

There are numerous authorities to accomplish the necessary work- authorities that help address urban and rural situations, alike. We (collective) need to begin to think nationwide. The Forest Service currently has over 600 field units engaging with communities on nation wide basis. The challenge is how to engage the public effectively- how can the agency begin to look at 740 million acres of forested land, instead of just the 191 million acres contained in the National Forest System.

It's easy to say that the Forest Service is committed to Collaborative Stewardship. It is more difficult to earn public credibility. There need to be ways to measure success and failure. A monitoring and evaluation model, which engages the public, will be essential- to determine if the agency is meeting public expectations.

The concept of Collaborative Stewardship is gaining considerable momentum on all fronts – ecosystem management being a part of this. Emphasized within current NFMA regulations are: sustainability, science, and collaborative stewardship. This set of rules will bring a new sense of

obligation by agency on what it wants to accomplish with the public over the long haul. Within the agency's strategic plan and our natural resource agenda, there is strong commitment to do this.

As an example, Janik shared the story "Lady in a faded gingham dress". The story begins with a lady (in faded gingham dress) and husband (in homespun thread suit), stepping off a train and walking into the president of Harvard's office. The secretary was not pleased with the couple, and stated that because they did not have an appointment, it was unlikely that they would be able to meet with the president. The lady said they would wait. As the hours passed, the secretary hoped they would leave, but they didn't. Finally, the frustrated secretary entered the president's office and urged him to see them- they had been waiting for hours. They were ushered in and upon sitting down; the president asked them what they wanted. Apparently they had a son who went to Harvard. He had been an active part of the campus, enjoying Harvard immensely. Unfortunately, he was killed in accident. The couple was meeting with the president because they hoped to erect a memorial somewhere on campus. The president grew irate, indicating that if they were to erect a statue for everyone who went to Harvard that died tragically, the campus Would look like a cemetery. The couple indicated that they weren't thinking of a statue, they were thinking of constructing an academic building. The president laughed. Obviously the couple had no idea that a building was expensive to construct- a physical plant on the Harvard campus cost an estimated $7.5 million. With that, the lady smiled and said, "Is that all it costs? Maybe we should start our own campus." They excused themselves and left. Shortly thereafter, Mr. and Mrs. Leland Stanford established Stanford University. *Moral: We cannot judge based on appearance alone. Secret opportunities wait in every facet of life and business.*

Collaborative Stewardship has many dimensions, and as such, working together is fundamental. There are new demographics and new outreach techniques to consider. The agency has to try and reach out to underserved members of our communities. The agency must think about expanding training opportunities and increasing access to projects (importance of the Economic Action Program). Even internal corporate training for the Forest Service will have to engage community members – we all must learn to behave in a more interactive way. A holding forum must be created for Collaborative Stewardship, so that the public and agency can gain confidence with each other- not just a spike in change, but a committed focus on business principles. These changes will undoubtedly lead to more opportunities. The question is, is the agency flexible enough to do all of this? The Forest Service is committed to flexibility- public interaction and pressure will create progress.

Most of the issues surrounding how to implement the National Fire Plan are issues related to mixed ownership. This workshop represents a mixed leadership situation. Jeff from the Ford Foundation and Bill Posseil, from the National Forest Foundation and those of you from communities represent these mixed issues. The last entity to lead implementation ought to be Forest Service. The time is ripe for the public to lead.

Two opportunities are upon us to help jump-start the process: National Fire Plan implementation and large scale watershed planning and restoration. The agency needs help in discovering how to comply with NEPA more efficiently, how to improve contracting mechanisms, and how to move more funds to the ground. The need to make these processes less bureaucratic is evident. It should be noted that there has been a National Strike Team formed to help develop action strategies and advance projects already in motion (not planning, but action).

The Quality Council, which is a group of people in Washington Office of the Forest Service, is also helping advance business principles throughout agency, as well as overseeing pilot projects

to institutionalize issues such as marketing, service first, partnership with BLM, and enterprise teams.

Heard Criticisms of FS:

- Delivery
- Engage with local grassroots
- Streamline working relationships
- Too tolerant of unnecessary delays
- Too tolerant of single attitudes
- Violated principles of CS in several major initiatives, leads to major mistrust

Update on Large Scale Watershed Restoration Projects

Presented by Rick Swanson, USDA Forest Service

For more information, visit: www.fs.fed.us/largewatershedprojects

The Large Scale Watershed Projects serve as an excellent template for successful community stewardship. Their focus is on significant opportunities surrounding natural resource restoration in large scale projects, some over 1 million acres. An attempt is made to link to existing efforts- for example connecting urban, wild, and rural issues or connecting the faucet to the forest.

The ultimate challenge of these projects is to protect and restore watersheds, while improving short and long-term sustainability.

Why large scale? The larger scale of projects result in greater benefits- an ability to pull in private and public agencies and improve movement of funds and projects between federal and state agencies. The size of the projects allow for the improved leverage of power and fragmented resources.

The Large Scale Watersheds Projects focus on integration, including assessments of watersheds, syntheses of information, and public cooperation. Approximately $46.7 million has been raised to implement the watershed projects (these funds are a combination of Washington Office, forest funds, and partner dollars) across nation.

Approximately 80 percent of the watershed projects are off National Forest lands. They represent a great diversity of resource conditions and management scenarios. Most have some mention of fire application within their business plan. They are diverse in size and land ownership patterns. As such, they offer a great community education tool.

How are the projects progressing? Through simpler language, proactively thinking about outcomes and not related process, and by closely tying performed work to existing budgets. The projects have endured an evolution in business plans, essentially adjusting current forest plans to resemble standard business plans (simpler process)

May or June 2001 the Forest Service will a publish a progress report for the projects.

Collaborative Stewardship Process Used in Watershed Projects

- Share leadership
- Ask customers what they want
- Valuing contributions
- Understanding we can no longer do it alone

Q: Have best-value contracts been used?
A: *Best value contracts have been used and are being reviewed to see how they effect local community, how often they are used in ads, criteria met by firms that were contracted to do the work. Some questions will be addressed in a report to be produced soon, however maybe not at the detail you desire.*

Q: Role of monitoring/evaluation?
A: *This will be an important element. Making clear with acquisition community, measure how effectively we have worked with communities. When* they begin to *monitor effectiveness,* they should *build in community health indicators. It will be important to monitor socio-economic impacts, in conjunction with mobile work force. Help local communities and local work force – illuminate who is part of larger work force. Need to remember scale, not just at very local level, but also at regional context. Business plan is the mechanism where assurance of this kind of monitoring would be conducted. Cost benefit analysis, need more emphasis. Can partner with nonprofit community, not just governmental organization, and another part of the collaborative process.*

Q: What is breakdown on private donations?
A: *Swanson will provide spreadsheet indicating other agency involvement vs. private sources. Local governments will be funding a lot of these kinds of initiatives.*

Q: How do local governments find out about these projects?
A: Projects sometimes have high visibility. Have another outreach efforts, such as an interactive web site at schools.

Q: Have local governments informed the Forest Service about how to best communicate with local communities?
A: Difficult to get large-scale community involvement, at watershed level. Communication is important – how does money keep all actors in the know and involved.

Q: Is there an example of where projects have resulted in the state being wiling to step back (e.g., TMDL's) to allow more effective resolution?
A: Don't have enough monitoring information to do this, next two or three years will be projects where we can do this.

Update on the Cohesive Fire Strategy: Forest Service

Presented by Lyle Laverty, USDA Forest Service

The involved agencies received a Presidential Directive in August 2001 to address issues related to fire readiness and restoration. In September 2000, the National Fire Plan was approved. This plan is designed to address issues within the wild land urban interface- specifically those areas that sustained large-scale fires in 2000. The Plan offers a first opportunity to look across agency

boundaries. It serves as the umbrella document for other major reports on effectiveness of fire readiness, management, and prevention (Cohesive strategy).

There are five key points to the National Fire Plan:

1. Firefighting: critical component of the plan is to aggressively fight fire and increase preparedness for optimal readiness. This portion of the plan involves aspects of recruitment, preparation and training, new technology development, establishment of suppression strategies, emergency contingency, workforce development, and maintenance.

2. Rehabilitation and Restoration: to address those acres intensely impacted by fire. Includes management of invasive species, economic impact, and linkages to priority watersheds. In essence, rebuild landscapes through a variety of activities.

3. Hazardous Fuels Management: Will involve varying aspects of fuels management, activity planning and analysis, and monitoring NEPA Compliance. May involve heavy application of research and development. Working closely at Interior. 7,000 projects in all agencies in 2001. All nearly-NEPA ready.

4. Community Assistance: Will involve, but is not limited to state fire assistance, volunteer fire assistance, market development, expansion of public education opportunities (e.g., Firewise and other fire prevention programs), etc.

5. Accountability: Established performance measures, budget and program planning allocations, information management. Essentially, the agencies will be required to track what is actually planned and what is being done on the ground. Currently there is a contract with Booz Allen on how to develop a system for information management. This will be operational in March. In addition, a national fire management web page is being developed.

Operating Principles behind the National Fire Plan

- Readiness and safety
- Prevention through education
- Rehabilitation
- Hazardous fuel reduction
- Restoration
- Collaborative stewardship
- Monitoring
- Creating jobs
- Applied research

Expected Outcomes from USFS side, not including Interior for FY2001

- 1.8 acres of fuels reduction on fed lands
- 395,000 acres of fuels reduction on non fed lands
- 750,000 acres of rehab and restoration
- 4,000 volunteer fires depts. Assisted
- 8,000 new jobs created

Progress to Date (January 2001)
The agencies have been working with the Western Governors Association to develop a 10-year Comprehensive Fire Management Strategy. In addition, there have been several recruitment efforts made for additional firefighters (through job fairs) and the agencies are completing a plan of work, which will be distributed, to Congress mid-January. This workplan will include the full list of projects. The agencies are currently working on the distribution of funds (to the field) but are awaiting the release of Title IV money from OMB. The draft Cohesive Strategy is being redrafted at the National Fire Center (anticipated release: February 2001).

Next steps

- Finalize long-term strategy
- Prepare for 2001 fire season
- Ensure adequate funding in FY2002 Appropriations to continue work associated with the National Fire Plan
- Continue to identify community in harms way, working with the Western Governors' Association for identification.
- Continue to implement fuels reduction projects
- Complete 1-year status report.

Update on the Cohesive Fire Strategy: Department of Interior

The Interior Side of the National Fire plan is more complex because there is more than one Bureau involved (e.g., NPS, USFWS, BIA, NOAA). Tim Hartzell is serving to coordinate activities. Interior is also concerned with managing rangeland and chaparral- not just forestlands. Obviously, there is a great need for project specific information from watershed councils and other more local-scale efforts to digest needs and implement the necessary work . Interior has activity descriptions that you all could look at to see what kinds of contracts will be coming up. The BLM has allocated approximately $10 million to small communities for training, equipment, and cost-sharing.

Update on Cohesive Fire Strategy: Questions and Comments

Q: With rehabilitation and fuels management project, will the Forest Service be using existing procurement mechanisms?
A: Contract mechanisms will be a mix. There is some flexibility in Title IV language. The push in initial fuels reduction work will be for non-traditional procurement. Title IV language requires a local community skills base. Will be working closely with communities to build local capacity.

Q: Concern about focusing on NEPA-ready projects. What does that say about the NEPA process and Section 7 consultation? And do these projects meet the intent of Congress?
A: Big, good question. Most of these projects were started a year or more ago, so they have gone through the NEPA process and facilitate implementation in FY 2001. Unfortunately, most of these projects are not close to at-risk communities. Therefore, the agencies must review high risk communities and the projects- matching up the two. This will create a storm because communities will wonder why these are not on list. The list has to be published in Federal Register in May 2001. With regard to Section 7 consultation, money has been allocated, including Forest Service appropriation of $11 million. The intent of these funds is to transfer to

overseeing agencies (e.g., NMFS, USFWS) to do section 7 work, consultation with these agencies. Hopefully this will streamline NEPA review.

Key will be 2002 projects. Where you all need to play. For these future projects, the agencies will be working with state foresters, state governors.

Q: Spoke with local forest, and they are concerned that high priority projects are not the projects ultimately being selected for implementation. The local forest offices prefer that funds be directed to each forest and the forest then make the decision on where to direct funds.
A: We would be happy to work with local forest. With regard to their concerns, selection criteria were likely not met, and that is why the projects weren't selected. We have operated under full disclosure.

Q*: In the Forest Service region I am working with (Region 6), Forest Service personnel don't have a good understanding of the selection criteria (high risk and high impacted communities). There remains a great deal of confusion surrounding the criteria.*
A: The criteria may change in the second year- may change from those communities at high risk to those who are highly dependent on resources and who have the capacity to perform work.

Q: Are any funds being given to individual forests so they can work with communities?
A: Funds are adequate. This is the first opportunity to implement projects within the spirit of collaborative stewardship. Regions may not feel they have the funds, but they are there. Choices need to make.

Q: The list demonstrates this a national problem. How are eastern governors being brought into the process?
A: *Working with National Association of Governors and the National Association of State Foresters with a specific focus in the southern and mid-Atlantic states.*

Q: There is an OGC opinion that you cannot give federal funds to FWS. How do you envision this all working?
A: Language has been prepared for supplemental appropriations (May 2001)making it legal to transfer money. However, there is the issue of doing things in the short term.

Q: When requests were made to the governors and state foresters for project or community selection, what guidelines were given?
A: Specific language was used in the conference report. Some states consulted with communities, others did not. Priest River Idaho has had a project for 3 years that the state did not include on its list. Need recommendations how communities can get engaged with the 10-year Comprehensive Strategy.

Q: When discussing priorities with states, communities, and foresters, are you getting the same answer?
A: Consultation with NEPA has resulted in different results from field. Will need more direction from the top re. USFWS and NMFS so that inconsistency is avoided and efforts/activities remain legal.

Q: From the national environmental perspective, individuals are worried that the funds will be misdirected. They are worried that the agencies are taking off-the-shelf NEPA projects, without applied science and collaborative stewardship.

A: First year strategy high risk. The managing agencies have been up front with Congress and interest groups over the nature of actions- based on direction from Congress. There are a number of projects that are aligned with communities.

Comment: Be clear about outcomes during NEPA review. NEPA ready projects may not have socio-economic benefits built into them. NEPA has categorically excluded category that can be used if part of roadside maintenance; here is an opportunity for working with local communities.

Summary:
Given that a lot of focus is on federal lands, the first year of implementation will be based on NEPA readiness. A great deal of thought will have to occur in determining a community level planning process. Therefore, the challenge for this meeting is how to involve communities in fire management and restoration. Essentially how can the Forest Service change the way they manage forests. This will involve different criteria to do this within context of at-risk communities.

The Cohesive Strategy is meant to address long term health of communities and forest, not just fire risk (e.g., habitat needs, watersheds, etc.). The agencies will need to work with delegations and produce a conference report.

Expectations of Community Forestry Workforce for Collaborative Stewardship

Presented by Lynn Jungwirth, Watershed Research and Training Center

A system needs to be developed for community based fire management. The traditional approach to fire has been a series of catastrophic fire events, followed by suppression- with all resources allocated in an emergency basis.

Communities benefit from contracts that are small, consistently offered from year to year, require immediate skills, and are long in duration. The focus should be on integrated management, with more money for local knowledge, not outside expertise. There needs to be decentralized capacity to manage.

In order to facilitate community-based organizations involvement, several issues are important. Scale is an important factor, as large projects become cumbersome for smaller companies. There needs to be considerable investment to attract sustainable rural livelihood. Training becomes an essential element- building diverse skills, different kinds of workers, and new workforces. New industry and markets should be developed at the community scale and new contracting practices should be tested.

Why should this be done? Such work provides a variety of mutual benefits, including high quality employment, healthy forests, improved protection from fire, workers who can participate in family life.

<u>Facets of Community Based Fire Management</u>

- Stable contracting
- Learning from past patterns.
- Businesses are most successful when work is offered in small packages
- Consistently offered each year
- Require intermediary skills, surveys, and stream restoration.

- Long in duration.
- Develop community based fire plans with locals
- Post fire rehabilitation

Community based management, ongoing activities

- Mapping,
- Environmental analysis
- Fire management
- Monitoring and research
- Complimentary value-added industry
- Small dam wood products
- Secondary manufacturing
- Monitoring

Issues Important to Community Groups

- Are the new hires located within HUB zone counties?
- Available job training
- New products and services
- Are program funds reaching the ground
- Is fire shed health improved? How many acres have changed from class 2-3
- Are communities at risk protected

Q: In this time of transition, how does the agency foresee work being completed?
A: Examples are cooperative agreements, grants, and a variety of contracts. By year 5, there undoubtedly will be new tools.

Q: There is some fear f indefinite quantity contracts on a national level. How does one build in protection to small communities that have the capacity, especially since there is rumor that this will occur with no one truly understanding how to access.
No answer provided.

Q: With the new administration will this momentum continue?
A: Janik thinks it will increase. States rights, governors, will be demanded by new administration.

Comment: Contract officers within the BLM seem to be more comfortable with using innovative mechanisms than the Forest Service. They have centralized their business center. The Forest Service currently has 325 contract officers across the country with independent decision (so that they can defend in court). Most forests do not have accounting officers for individual business decisions.

Comment: Socio-economic information needs to be better distributed, especially since 60% of existing forest plans are currently up for revisions. In some parts of the country there is reduced capacity among non-profits for retraining. Hubzone contractors need to sign up via internet- but unfortunately, many do not have computers or internet access. There is issue about equity- who gets the work, local or mobile? Businesses size also needs to be a criteria.

Expectations of Mobile Workforce for Collaborative Stewardship

Presented by Cece Headley, Juan Mendoza, and Tim Sweet

Historically, there has never been much concern over conditions of the mobile workforce, as they relate to contracting. They have long been considered an underclass community. Traditionally, people of color were responsible for manual labor, while Caucasians do the seemingly "easy" work. The mobile workforce been doing restoration work since the early 1960's, of which, approximately 90% are Latinos (specifically in reforestation).

The mobile workforce is captured by a low-bid system. In general, workers follow the lead of the contractor, who acquires work with a low bid. The contractor needs to survive as company and provide jobs for workers.

As work in the national forests is shifting from an extractive to a restorative slant, there is a strong possibility that the mobile workforce will be displaced because of best value contracting language within Title IV. The social aspect of best-value contracting has a bias for local firms. If we are locked out of areas where we used to work, we essentially become displaced. It is suggested that the larger community have a meeting where they discuss the language in the Appropriations Bill- an agreement to get together to iron-out concerns (social) as they relate to "best-value".

Our purpose is to work with community based forestry, as we have been a major stakeholder over the past 30 years. With the National Fire Plan, billions of dollars in revenue will be shared with various counties. The mobile workforce also pay taxes, therefore we should be able to negotiate how projects are contracted and be involved in drafting language that is advantageous to both the mobile work force and place-based communities.

Training will also be essential. Assessments of in-house capacity in procurement also needs to be evaluated and supplemented- making certain that investment in contracting officers is made.

It should be noted that the current work force does not want to have conflict with community-based or place-based workers. Rather, we want to be included at every step of the way- from the design to the implementation of programs.

Q: It seems like a conflict between community based and pool of migrating forest workers exists. True?

A: We are trying to prevent this. Language has been in the works for 4-years. Some funds need to be targeted to build the capacity of both workforce groups. We're not looking for 100% of existing funds to go one way or another. When funds were distributed in the Pacific Northwest, the mobile workforce was ignored. We don't want this to happen again. We would encourage the use of funds for training to do new kinds of work and also contracts.

Q: Is there an existing model (economic) the Forest Service can use to evaluate what has happened with mobile or local workforce?

A: Region 6, has a successful model. They are currently writing a tool kit with a team of experts from the agency and contractors to go "on the road" and train others.

Q: Any plans for training seminars?

***A:** Currently working with corporate training staff to have collaborative stewardship cornerstone of efforts. Forest Supervisors Working Group.*

Comment: Be careful not to overreact to terms like "best value". Realize that discussions indicate a need for everyone to get together to discuss project plans and design.

Role of Forest Service in Building Local Capacity

Presented by Susan Odell, USDA Forest Service

> "Sustainable community development is not based on finding the solution but on increasing the capacity of individuals and communities to work together in response to the constant changes" Cornelia Flora.

In the late 1980's, the USDA reflected upon what its strategic role was in rural areas. Eleven workshops were held across the country to discuss a plan of action. Ultimately a strategy emerged entitled "Working Together for Rural America". In 1991, the Forest Service was able to refocus some of their work in marketing, broadening forest management conservation, and taking additional strategic steps. In 1992, various communities began to be engaged local action planning.

Many people say that community information is fairly anecdotal. Eventually, reports and information will be made available in a web-based process- tying together with GIS data (and other kinds of data). Coordination will take place at a variety of levels (2 staff members have been identified within the Washington Office). A great deal of work has already been done with Congress (e.g., grasslands under original farm bill authority).

Social Capital is the Product of the Group

- Mutual trust
- Reciprocal networks
- Groups
- Shared symbols
- Collective identity

Collaboration Between the Forest Service and State Government Assistance Programs

Presented by Janet Anderson Tyler, USDA Forest Service

Tyler offered an overview on the various funding streams within the National Fire Plan, as they relate to community assistance.

Program	**Details**
State Fire	$50.494 million (incorporating Title IV funds and emergency funds)
Preparedness	FIREWISE- Direct grants to states
Hazard Mitigation	Western states had utilized a competitive process. Over 176 projects were submitted (prevention-education, Firewise, fuels mitigation, hazard mitigation) Overview is available at www.fs.fed.us
Volunteer Fire Assistance	$ 8.28 million

Economic Development	$12.5 million (e.g., marketing and utilization, biomass/ethanol, primary western focus)
Community and Private Land Assistance	$35 million
Fenceposts and Facilities	$9 million
State Fire Assistance	$6 million
Stewardship (private)	$7 million
Community Assistance	$13 million (market/utilization, community planning)

Working with the States

Presented by Jim Hubbard, Colorado Forest Service

There has been a great deal of pressure from the federal government because the states have to treat a certain amount of acres. Because there are a number of programs and organizations, there are a high number of expectations. Specific contacts have been identified with the managing agencies (FS, BLM, NPS, and BIA,). Coordination with all entities is just starting.

Q: The Forest Incentive Program is different from the Stewardship Incentive Program (currently not funded).
A: SIP is not recreated in within the Fire Plan. Permission was granted for states to use funds to reduce fuel on private land. Stewardship dollars are available but at the discretion of each individual state and for areas in need of rehabilitation/restoration after fires.

Q: How is the decision made to determine the distribution of funds by the state?
A. Currently funding decisions are being handled like RCA, at the regional level. Funds will not enter a discretionary pool. Some decisions have already been made. State foresters and rural development coordinators will be good source for direction on funds. Unfortunately, not all states are well connected. Distributed funds will be different from those sent to communities affected by fires in 2000.

Q: Small Diameter Utilization Center?
A: The Center is a small utilization center within Colorado State University focusing on wood science, harvesting & utilization, outreach, community assistance, market development. Budget of $1.2 million to run the center.

Comment: There are manufacturing plants in Montana that are going out of business because they cannot compete with Canadian subsidized manufacturers. USFS should make sure that landowners are purchasing American made products in rehab projects (e.g., fencing, posts, etc.)

Comment: The selection criteria for projects needs to include forest fire risk and where community plans are in place- to have measurable link between forest fire and land management.

Comment: Communities are at risk from polarization. Federal agencies believe that once the agency is ready, the communities will be there to perform the necessary tasks and offer support. These coalitions are extremely fragile. The holding environment cannot last. They are tired of waiting.

Background on Stewardship Contracting

Presented by Mary Mitsos, Pinchot Institute for Conservation

The concept of stewardship contracts began in the 1980s, when land service management contracts were first introduced in response to shrinking federal budgets, reduced personnel, and demands from the public for a broader range of outputs from federal forests and rangeland. These early contracts were designed to create significant savings of public funds through improved contract administration, specification of desired end-results, and the consolidation of multiple stand improvement contracts into one mechanism. Although these contracts were initially developed to facilitate traditional timber management objectives, they soon evolved into a more comprehensive approach, supporting the many tenets and practices defined within ecosystem management. In the 1990s, these early land stewardship contracts broadened to include local small business participation, alternative land management strategies, and locally based planning efforts.

Today, some or all of the following key points characterize stewardship contracting:

- Broad-based public (community) collaboration. The intent of stewardship contracts is to develop a process of broad-based community participation, which is open, transparent, and inclusive. This collaboration can be used to bolster public and agency learning, to encourage interaction among a broad array of stakeholders, and to utilize the existing knowledge base.

- Provisions for multi-year, multi-task, end-results oriented activities. Within stewardship contracts, bidders are typically given a description of the desired future condition from the agency and asked to describe how they would use their skills and experience to achieve the defined vision. This format provides an opportunity for contractors to be flexible and innovative in their approaches and practices.

- Comprehensive approach to ecosystem management. Within stewardship contracts, techniques and practices are designed under the umbrella of holistic, ecosystem approaches. Often these management activities are coordinated within a diverse set of objectives, including vegetation management, wildlife habitat enhancement, recreational development, and stream or riparian restoration. They also refocus the scope of projects from stand-level (as used in the past) to new ecological scales.

- Improved administrative efficiency and cost to the agency. Stewardship contracts are an alternative means of implementing ecosystem management policies, relying on the shift of forest/rangeland management towards achieving a desired future resource condition rather than meeting an assigned target or predetermined schedule of output. Stewardship contracts are designed to combine a set of activities into a single contract, thereby improving contract efficiency and possibly reducing cost to the agency.

- Creation of a new workforce focused on maintenance and restoration activities. Because stewardship contracts often contain a wide array of services (including those that involve the

collection of multiple forest products), such contracts have the ability to contribute to the development of sustainable rural communities. Through improved and increased restoration/maintenance of the natural environment, stewardship contracts help provide living wages, new employment opportunities, and overall diversification of rural economies.

Understanding Existing and Available Authorities for Stewardship

Presented by Ron Hooper, USDA Forest Service

There seems to be a great deal of confusion over the term "stewardship". In forefront of these projects, we must look at all of the surrounding rules or authorities, no doubt to keep in mind ecosystem health and consulting with public. We must specifically address the community capacity issue and how to access communities through grants, agreements, contracts, and job training.

Language within Title IV waives competition. It allows for awarding contracts on a sole-source basis, thereby reducing competition for non-profits. Given this, the understanding of the acquisition structure is important. It is hoped that by the end of March, the acquisition environment (community) will be ready.

As a result of Title 4, what was once done through traditional contract mechanisms can now be done with different kinds of organizations. Title IV allows for wider authority and flexibility, especially in the procurement process. Title IV offers flexibility in accessing communities, NGOs, and youth groups. Regional Directors have staffing plans to adjust organizations and increase staffing to respond to in particular National Fire plan and overall watershed restoration records.

In addition to the new language within Title IV, Region 6 has developed a toolbox that helps identify specific relationships and what tools are available to reach these goals.

Identified Contracting Needs

- Toolboxes
- Striketeams
- Flow of information
- Capacity building within forest service
- Capacity building among interested parties.

Q: Clarify the non-profit role?
A: Title IV said that FARs do not apply- there are no restrictions on agreements. Most contracts in the west are SBA's, leg. Title 4 waived specifics for haz fuel reduction. Now contracts can be awarded to non-profits and community groups.

Q: The only time that contractors see stewardship contracts is after their development and it's ready for bid. They are not a part of the design or collaborative process.
A: We must be different about new approaches and conscious of who we have a the table.

Q: What is the general opinion of embedded contracts?
A: Embedded contracts do not offer a perfect weave, more overlap and stacking. There are legal and administrative obstacles- people are not comfortable working with this.

Q: Within Title IV, what is the duration of authorities to work with nonprofits? Are there opportunities for broadening this?
A: Anticipating bundled contracts with hazardous fuels reduction and other items. There will be opportunity to broaden the ability to work with nonprofits. Anticipate same language in 2002 through life of national fire plan, so anticipate for 10 years. Challenge is Fed Acq. Regs, don't see a change. However, this may not be an obstacle. There are no barriers for active involvement in projects via agreements and grants.

Comment: The BLM has 7 coop agents with nonprofits and tribes. Expand circle so more entities partnering.

Comment: Grants and agreements are the typical mechanism used with non-profits. Unfortunately, cooperative agreements often require matching funds and must be in the public's interest (no profit).

Comment: Currently there are 325 contract officers that are being trained that stewardship is effective, efficient and safe.

Comment: The Forest Service is working with OGC to get legal support to broaden the applicability of grants, cooperative agreements, and participatory agreements. Internally they have made the process too complex.

Comment: The mobile workforce must be a part of the community. Why are they not entitled to a stable community? Livable wages? Need to address the same concerns for them.

Comment: Bonding is a huge issue. Small organizations must have a break because they cannot get bonds.

Comment: The Forest Service is looking to hire 37 new contracting officers (not in the Washington Office).

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Breakout Sessions

Participants broke into approximately 10 groups to further discuss issues, tasks to address, and early development of action plans. Essentially, they were asked to identify key issues that the community should address during FY2001 and FY2002.

Following discussion, participants were asked to identify their group's top 10 tasks, organize them in priority and then distribute them for comment.

Identified Issues and Key Contacts

The following tasks were identified at the close of the workshop, with responsible organizations and/or individuals listed in brackets.

1. General Coordinator- They will be the clearing house for information dissemination [*American Forests/Pinchot Institute*]

2. Community and sub-state workshop and materials development [*NNFP*].

3. Clarification of definitions for language within Title IV [*Alliance of Forest Workers, American Forests, Joyce Casey*].

4. Outreach efforts (local government, national environmental community, congress, state foresters, district rangers or BLM equivalent) [*USFS- Joyce Casey*].

5. Capacity building (policy, key staff in BLM, DOI, FS) with direction and development of tools [*USFS- Joyce Casey*].

6. Communication plan [*USFS – Joyce Casey*]

7. Monitoring and Evaluation of the Framework [*USFS, Communities Committee*]

8. Task Force on barriers [*Society of American Foresters*]

9. Federal Register published criteria - get feedback from communities [*Communities Committee*]

10. Policy and education [*Society of American Foresters*]

11. Materials Development [*Pinchot Institute]*

12. Outreach to low capacity organizations/communities [*NNFP*]

Leads plan on having a conference call in three weeks to determine progress. Leads will have an estimated workplan and budgets prepared by March 15th (deliverables identified).

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PINCHOT INSTITUTE
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Background

Recognized as a leader in forest conservation thought, policy and action, the Pinchot Institute for Conservation was dedicated in 1963 by President John F. Kennedy at Grey Towers National Historic Landmark (Milford, PA) – home of conservation leader Gifford Pinchot. The Institute is an independent nonprofit organization that works collaboratively with all Americans – from federal and state policymakers to citizens in rural communities – to strengthen forest conservation by advancing sustainable forest management, developing conservation leaders, and providing science-based solutions to emerging natural resource issues. Each year, the Pinchot Institute conducts policy research and analysis; convenes and facilitates meetings, workshops, and symposiums; produces educational publications; and provides technical assistance on issues that affect national-level conservation policies and the management of our national forests and other natural resources.

Current Programs

The Institute's objectives (policy research and analysis, convening and facilitation, and developing conservation leaders) are realized annually through the following programs:

Community-Based Forest Stewardship

Through technical assistance programs and training sessions, policymakers, federal and state land management agencies, and local practitioners work collaboratively to identify, address, and develop strategies on specific initiatives that sustain and improve the stewardship of multiple-objective ecosystems and enable them to serve as a basis for stable employment and generate income in rural communities.

Conservation Policy and Organizational Change

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